

DEPARTMENT ZERO
Series Pilot Outline
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Based on *Patient Zero* by Jonathan Maberry
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TEASER

EXT. LOS ANGELES - ALAMEDA STREET, DOWNTOWN - DAY

A chase as massive as an economic-meltdown license fee can muster without a deficit partner. A semi CAREENS down an industrial street - SCRAPING one of several BLACK & WHITES into the side of a building. Radio CHATTER from a police helicopter crackles: units in pursuit of a terror suspect. An unmarked CUTS into the lead from a bridge over the LA River.

INTERCUT WITH THE UNMARKED - CONTINUOUS

JOE LEDGER (mid 30's, Chris Pine in a few years) argues with his partner RUDY VAZQUEZ (late 20's, played by Rosario Dawson - what we nowadays refer to as a "wise Latina"). He wants to shoot the tires on the truck, but can't get a clean bead - so he demands that Rudy take the wheel.

The two argue like a brother and sister over the X-Box: and even this brief glimpse of their relationship makes it clear they have been through a lot together and have a complete rapport. Rudy does not want Joe to take the wheel, worried that he's about to do something crazy. Joe assures her, he's not about to do something crazy. She shakes her head grudgingly and takes the wheel...and Joe does something crazy. He KICKS the door, climbs onto the semi and Indiana Jones his way forward!

INSIDE THE TRUCK - INTERCUT WITH JOE

The fugitive, JAVAD (sweating, unkempt: a sick man) wipes a trickle of blood coming from his nose - struggling to keep the truck on its destructive path. He reaches for a silver vial - pops it open to dump several aspirin-like pills into his mouth and chews frantically - then sees Joe in the rearview, aiming to shoot the tire.

Javad WRENCHES the truck - causing much collateral vehicular carnage. Joe scrambles...grabs a handle...then puts THREE SHOTS through the cab into Javad's spine. The truck PLUNGES into an escape ramp with a massive eruption of water and debris! The black and whites STOP. Rudy steps out of the unmarked. Silence. The last of the debris arcs to the ground...and as Joe Ledger SWAGGERS out of the smoking wreck, locking eyes with the incredulous crowd and his partner...

INT. LAPD - MORGUE CORRIDOR - DAY

As Rudy and Joe stride to an examination room, she lets him know that his behavior today would have him up for a psych review...if this wasn't his last week in the force. Joe is about to enter FBI training at Quantico.

He wishes Rudy would go with him. She shakes her head - she belongs here, dyed-in-the-wool Angeleno that she is. Rudy wishes aloud that he'd stop asking her to transfer just because he's bored with the gig. Engaging in dime-store psychoanalysis, Rudy suggests that Joe will get bored after a short time at the FBI, just like he did at the LAPD. Joe changes the topic and asks Rudy the real question troubling him: why would a terror fugitive take aspirin during a high speed chase?

"Maybe he had a headache," she responds, pulling out a glass hip flask two-thirds of the way full of rum and offering it as "psych therapy." Joe confiscates Rudy's flask and puts it in his pocket - she's still on duty, and he's serious, wondering if this terrorist cell has been using drugs to "motivate" its members.

INT. LAPD - MORGUE - CONTINUOUS

Joe and Rudy find that Javad's body has been taken away with all the evidence from their twelve-month investigation - confiscated by Homeland Security. Rudy raises hell, only to be cut off by badge-toting Homeland Security Agents led by a tall blond woman with a vaguely mid-atlantic accent (GRACE COURTLANDT - late 20's/early 30's - Sienna Miller after a few months in the gym, or Michelle Ryan if you prefer a brunette) and an Asian man who introduces himself as DOCTOR HU (early 20's - John Cho).

"Doctor Who? That some kind of a code name?" Hu removes his glasses and stares a dagger at Joe: "Hu - H.U. - I'm Asian if you didn't notice." Showing herself the feisty one in the partnership, Rudy turns up the fight. She doesn't care what department of the Federal Government they work for, she doesn't like them taking away their perpetrator's body without regard for jurisdiction.

Joe points out Courtlandt's accent - coolly sizing her up: she doesn't sound like a Homeland Security Agent, and her weapon isn't standard issue. "Who Are you people?" He asks.

"The people taking you with us." Grace answers. Ice. Rudy steps up - wherever they are going, she's ready to go. Grace pushes her back: the invitation is for Joe alone.

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE - DAY

A government-issue Oldsmobuick pulls up to a mansion in a Pasadena woodland. Joe sits alone in the back: face covered by a black hood.

INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Courtlandt removes Joe's hood. The house is covered with high tech like some kind of covert field office. AGENTS IN SUITS operate computers, retinal scanners, and GPS terminals. Joe keeps his cool - he scans the place and asks what he is doing here. Courtlandt tells Joe all she wants is for him to interrogate a prisoner. After that, he'll be free to go.

"Interrogate a prisoner?" Joe asks. Courtlandt responds by shooting him the kind of look usually reserved for Alpha males challenging one another and tells him that she'll be happy to return him to the Station House if he's nervous. The two circle one another - there's chemistry here.

Joe takes the challenge. Grace holds her ID to a scanner and ushers Joe into a darkened hallway to:

INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - INTERROGATION CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

A man sits huddled over in a corner. Joe approaches...taps the man on the shoulder....and the man spins around with a feral SCREAM...his skin is grey and his eyes are bloodshot...but he is - unmistakably - Javad.

END OF TEASER**ACT ONE****INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - INTERROGATION CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS**

Javad LUNGES at Joe with an inhuman SHRIEK, trying to bite him. Joe goes in for the kill. In a harrowing fistfight, Joe puts Javad down and SNAPS his neck - making certain that Javad is out for good before storming out of the chamber - adrenalized - to confront Courtlandt and Hu.

"When you have to kill a terrorist twice in one day, there's either something wrong with your skills, or something wrong with the world - and there's nothing wrong with my skills."

Joe demands that Courtlandt and Hu tell him what they did to Javad to turn him from terrorist to zombie. Hu wrinkles his nose - they prefer the term "Walkers," and he is sick with a genetically modified prion disease.

"Prion disease?" Joe asks. Hu nods - and adds that Javad had been infected for a while - if they had left him in the morgue, others might have been infected: a plague could have started that would have rendered Los Angeles a city of the dead in mere weeks.

"And you put me in a room with that thing? Who the hell are you people?" Grace smiles and tells Joe that they will call him if they need him...and with that, she TASERS him.

INT. JOE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Joe comes to - as his dog licks his face. Keeping his cool, he picks up the phone and dials Rudy...who wakes up to his request that she meet him for a private investigation. Wiping the sleep from her face, Rudy tells Joe that he knows the price for her services when she's off the clock:

"Iced half-caf ristretto quad grande two pump raspberry two percent no whip light ice with caramel drizzle three-and-a-half-pump white mocha."

INT. LAPD - RUDY'S CAR - NIGHT

Joe enters the car outside police HQ, handing a bleary-eyed Rudy her Starbucks...and placing a hood over his own head. "Pull up to the loading dock where the feds took me...turn left and drive a quarter mile to the freeway entrance."

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE - DAWN

Rudy pulls up - shocked that Joe brought her here flawlessly by rebuilding the path from memory: where'd he get that skill? But as Joe pulls off the hood...REVEAL that the place is abandoned and overgrown. Joe shakes his head. Cute.

INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - DAY

Joe remembers everything: as he leads Rudy inside the abandoned house, his memory FLASHES to show details like the computers (bearing graphics with the initials "DMS"), the guns (none of them standard issue) and the keypads and retinal scanners (all manufactured by the same company).

Joe knows damn well these guys weren't standard-issue Homeland Security clowns - and their scuttling an entire field office in short order proves it. Joe tells Rudy he wants her to find all the information she can on prions and prion diseases - who's doing significant research and why.

Joe's Holmes and Watson relationship with Rudy is cemented in these scenes: the teamwork and easy rapport that make them a necessary part of one another's life.

Returning to the car, Joe resolves to find who or what the DMS are, and where they get off taking over their case. As Joe and Rudy enter her car and drive off...REVEAL a camera - in the bushes...watching... and on the other end...

INT. DEPARTMENT ZERO - CONTINUOUS

An office in a truly aspirational high-tech, high-end, cool-as-hell space. Flanked by Dr. Hu, Grace Courtlandt stands before a bank of flat screens, watching numerous surveillance feeds of Joe outside the house.

EXT. STARBUCKS - DAY

Joe hands Rudy an iced half-caf ristretto quad grande two pump raspberry two percent no whip light ice with caramel drizzle three-and-a-half-pump white mocha and they trade notes. All Joe could find is a mention of DMS in a government inventory from a legacy archive from the late 40's: the Department of Military Sciences. A search for "Stephen Hu" among PhD candidates in the past five years yielded the phone book...and the only Grace Courtlandt he could find was a British Soldier listed as killed in action in the gulf. These people are ghosts.

Rudy tells Joe about her research on prions: infectious agents composed of protein, prions cause a number of diseases, including bovine spongiform encephalopathy (mad cow) in cattle and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in humans. All known prion diseases affect the structure of the brain or other neural tissue, all are currently untreatable and all are always fatal..."but there's nothing in any of the medical literature," Rudy adds "that would turn a garden-variety terrorist into a flesh-biting zombie."

INT. MERCEDES BENZ - DAY

SEBASTIAN GAULT (40's, big successful smile and a good disposition; John Cusack on a good day) drives while showing off his new PDA/cellphone to his passenger - his bodyguard. It's a new piece of technology - untraceable and not yet on the market. Sebastian smiles, loving his new gadget, and stops the car...stepping out into...

INT. LONG BEACH WAREHOUSE - DAY

Gault enters the cavernous space. ARMED GUARDS stand on the mezzanine - one of them opening a silver vial and chomping down on the same aspirin-like pills seen in Javad's hands in the teaser. Gault is met by AMIRAH (Shoreh Agdashloo) and EL MUJAHID (40's, Cliff Curtis): El Mujahid doesn't say much, but Gault and Amirah talk like trusted business partners as they walk down a corridor to a lab set-up deep in the warehouse for the demonstration.

Gault stops - all he needs to know is that the product works...this is a numbers game for him, a demonstration seems like overkill. Amirah shakes her head: he has paid a lot of money, and they have put a lot of time into this research - they want him to see what he is about to unleash.

INT. LONG BEACH WAREHOUSE - WALK-IN REFRIGERATOR - CONTINUOUS

A mannequin stands at the center, wearing a low-profile vest rigged with miniature tubes of compressed air and what appear to be hundreds of miniature flechettes. Clearly uncomfortable in this setting, Gault focuses on the mannequin - asking Amirah how long it will take for the system to be complete and if they expect the delivery to take place as scheduled.

Amirah smiles - a supplier promising a buyer a successful delivery...Gault forces a nod of acknowledgement - something is clearly making him very uncomfortable...and as he tries to show her his new cell phone...the source of his discomfort becomes clear...REVEAL THEIR HOSTAGES...bound to chairs and ball-gagged - sitting across from the mannequin as Amirah ushers Gault behind a protective lucite screen and pushes a button on a remote control. The vest ERUPTS with a PHHHWWWSHHH! Of compressed air. The flechettes PIERCE through the shirt on the mannequin - SCHWOOMING across the room to hit the hostages.

Gault turns away from the sight - horrified - but Amirah and El Mujahid watch...as the hostages writhe in pain...their skin turns grey, and their eyes go bloodshot. The hostages have become walkers.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. JOE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Joe comes home and methodically strips and stores his gun and badge. Joe takes off his jacket, and that's when he hears the sound of liquid. Joe pulls out Rudy's flask, and smiles...until he realizes it's almost completely full.

"Sons of bitches." Joe examines the flask, dumps the contents... and finds a surveillance device planted in the cap. Joe scans his apartment - methodically searching for other devices. He finds one - then another - and another. As Joe SMASHES the surveillance devices...

INTERCUT WITH GRACE AT DEPARTMENT ZERO

...watching Joe on the monitors as he takes out their surveillance one device after the other.

One of the monitors goes blank, then another, and another. Grace turns to the other person in the room and declares that "he passed the tests - killed the walker, found the house, dumped our surveillance."

"Not all of our surveillance," answers a male voice as a hand reaches into frame and pushes a button: a 3-D image of Joe appears on a holo-imaging device on the desk. Grace turns to the man in the office with her - MISTER CHURCH (late 30's - mid 40's imagine Don Draper...if Don Draper was a Nazi). Grace turns to Mister Church - a holographic imager? That wasn't part of the surveillance package - and how did Mister Church get that kind of next-gen technology?

Church shrugs and replies with a phrase he will say often: "I have friends in the business." And with that, he orders Grace to bring Joe in.

INT. DEPARTMENT ZERO - CHURCH'S SITUATION ROOM - DAY

A garage-style door opens to introduce Joe, flanked by Grace and Doctor Hu, to Mister Church's situation room - a darkened space with a large touch-sensitive multi-media table that serves as the nerve center.

"Welcome to Department Zero. Would you like a cookie?" Mister Church pushes a nicely arranged plate of cookies across the table to Joe. Joe takes an Oreo, Mister Church a Nilla Wafer: leading Joe to opine that he could never trust someone who chooses a Nilla Wafer over an Oreo.

"I don't need you to trust me," Mister Church replies.

"I thought you guys were DMS, not 'Department Zero'" Joe replies, fishing. Mister Church tells him that the acronym dates from the late 40's, when this organization existed as a UFO investigation unit. There has always been a Department of Military Sciences, and it's always been a cover for a Special Military Unit: always the President's black bag operation du jour. Because their work is so covert, Mister Church and his team prefer to call themselves "Department Zero."

"So you're the Men in Black? Generic suits, skinny ties, some flashy thing that's gonna give me amnesia?"

"No UFO's, no aliens, no amnesia." Mister Church says, pulling out a dossier on Joe: after three tours of duty in the Gulf, Joe signed up for the LAPD and got his Gold Shield in record time. In his off time, Joe has acquired multiple black belts, trains at the Institute for Lethal Force, and practices defusing explosives with the LAPD's bomb squad - even though he has never put in for a transfer. Now he's about to move to Virginia to train with the FBI at Quantico and enter the fast track for a posting as a Special Agent.

In spite of being commended at every position, Joe has never settled in one place, one job, one posting. Why is that? Joe explains that he gets easily bored.

"What if I could offer you a job in which you would never be bored?" Mister Church states, and then describes Department Zero: a military unit with an unlimited black-bag budget, access to cutting edge technology, and a very short chain of command - they answer only to the President.

"And the President knows that you kidnap people, bug their homes, and shred the Constitution?"

Church looks at Joe: "You know that issues-with-authority-lone-wolf-don't-tread-on-me act you're fixing to let loose? Don't. You have no idea who we are and we are up against. There's a terrorist cell in this country with access to a prion-based agent that turns people into disease-spreading zombies. Last week it was a presidential assassin using light-warping meta-materials technology to make himself invisible...and the week before that it was a transnational criminal cartel smuggling plasma beam weapons to insurgents in Paraguay. The world is full of bad men using dangerous technology to attack us - it's our job to make sure our country sleeps tight without ever knowing just how close they came to the brink. Am I boring you now, Mr. Ledger?"

Joe shakes his head. He's intrigued. Mister Church touches his table and the dark walls behind him BECOME TRANSPARENT - REVEALING THE DEPARTMENT ZERO OPS AREA - a vast loft festooned with computers, vehicles and weapons...in short, the biggest fucking toybox a boy could ever ask for.

INT. DEPARTMENT ZERO - OPS AREA - CONTINUOUS

Joe marvels at the gear surrounding him. Mister Church makes it clear that Joe could spend the rest of his life fighting the baddest-of-the-bad, armed with the best-of-the-best...or he could just bounce from posting to posting, chasing some elusive high that's never going to come.

"I need you in Echo Team," Mister Church concludes.

"What happened to Alpha, Bravo, Charlie and Delta team?"

"Alpha's in Pakistan, Bravo's in Africa, Charlie's stationed in the East Coast...and Delat was killed in action in Baja two weeks ago," Church replies as he looks at Grace, "only their leader survived."

"We raided a terrorist bio-lab," Grace adds, a little defensive, "the place was rigged to self-destruct, but I brought back intel that led us to Javad."

Church explains that for the past four months, they have been on the track of *Seif Al Din* - the sword of the faith - the terrorist group to which Javad belonged.

"I know who they are," Joe counters, "me and Rudy spent a year tracking Javad - he's a bomb maker."

"He's much more than that," Mister Church continues. "*Seif Al Din* is working on a way to weaponize the prion disease...all signs point to an attack being imminent. And the disease is unstoppable." Dr. Hu then explains that the bad guys have infected all their key personnel with the disease, and the way they keep them from turning into walkers is by providing a steady supply of a control agent: concealed in the aspirins. The control agent isn't a cure - it merely holds back the prion disease. The victim has to take a dose every three hours. Miss a dose; you're a walker.

These are the kinds of enemies we are up against - not a bunch of bomb-throwing hobgoblin radicals, but incredibly well capitalized professionals possessed of technology whose existence normal people are better off never knowing about.

"So, are you in or out, Joe?" All Joe needs to know is who's leading Echo Team. Mister Church? Church shakes his head - never gets his hands dirty. Courtlandt? No - she just lost her team, she's an observer. Hu? He's a doctor, not a warrior. Mister Church tells Joe that the question of the team's leadership is still open and leads him into -

INT. DEPARTMENT ZERO - CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

- inside are four men, a BIG GUY, a BIGGER GUY, an EVEN BIGGER GUY and the BIGGEST FUCKING GUY YOU EVER SAW: an ex-Delta Force captain, a Marine Special Ops Commander, a South African Special Services trooper on loan to the US of A (who is also the whitest, most blue-eyed man alive), and a Navy Seal Commander (the biggest fucking guy you ever saw - his name is OLLIE).

Joe enters. Mister Church closes the door behind him. The Big Guy explains to Joe that they have all been brought in by Mister Church - new recruits vying for the job of Echo Team leader. Mister Church's managerial strategy has been to lock them all up in this room and let them work it out. They have been arguing their tactical abilities for the last few hours trying to ascertain which of them is best suited for the job.

Joe nods...and then SUCKER PUNCHES the Big Guy, KNEES the Bigger Guy in the groin - incapacitating him long enough to strike him in the deltoid muscle cluster and paralyzing his arm - and then STRIKES the Even Bigger Guy, putting him on the ground with extreme prejudice...

...and that's when Ollie - knowing what's what - lifts his hands and just says: "Where to, Boss?"

INT. DEPARTMENT ZERO - VEHICLE AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Joe leads Echo Team - now suited up in sleek anti-infection suits lined with kevlar (Mister Church has a friend in the business) - and locked and loaded with machine pistols - toward a waiting CH-47 Chinook troop carrying helicopter as Mister Church briefs them.

The laptops recovered by Delta Team have led us to a warehouse where *Seif Al Din* is producing the prion disease. Our mission is to infiltrate and shut down with extreme prejudice. The team have all been outfitted with PDAs with all the necessary maps and information - they are to study them on the flight. Doctor Hu takes over the briefing: the disease is transmitted by walker saliva and is extremely virulent and fast acting - so avoid all walker bites.

As the team steps to the helicopter, the South African Special Services trooper whispers in Joe's ear - "you suckered me - first chance I get, I'm gonna put you down."

Joe STRIKES the South African across the throat. The guy drops like a sack. "He's gonna need a hospital - and the team's one man short." Grace and Mister Church exchange glances - she has operational experience with *Seif Al Din*, she'll suit up. Joe looks at Grace, then turns to Church: she just lost her team, should she be on the field?

"I did not lose my team," Grace snaps - not appreciating his candor: "they were killed in action." As she strides off, Mister Church tells Joe that Grace was a member of the British Armed Forces Special Reconnaissance Regiment, the only Special branch that recruits women - she also worked with MI:6 and BARRIER, the British equivalent to Department Zero. In short: she is every bit Joe's equal, and he'd better get used to taking orders from her on occasion...because, as Joe found out when he kicked the crap out of the other team leader candidates, leadership in this organization is a rapidly shifting concept.

Joe turns to Mister Church: "I want Rudy Vasquez on the team - do whatever it takes to get her here...triple her salary if you have to."

"Is Vasquez more to you than another gold shield?"

"If you didn't know the answer to that question already, I wouldn't have signed up," Joe counters, adding that "I can't think without her." Mister Church nods - and as Joe enters the helicopter...

IN A MONTAGE

The Chinook PLOUGHS the skies - the soldiers in the back study their PDAs and take orders from Joe. The inside of the helicopter is decked out with cool tech - and weapons galore. But Grace's eyes are on Joe - letting him know he'd better not dare second-guess her again.

EXT/INT. LONG BEACH WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

The warehouse previously seen in the open scene with Sebastian Gault, Amirah and El Mujahid. In a series of QUICK CUTS showing Joe's moves as both soldier and leader, Echo team infiltrates the plant - smooth and stealthy - cutting fences, navigating the blacktop like an oil slick, knifing guards and putting them down in complete silence...

...until they make their way into the main area of the warehouse and are ATTACKED by guards. A kick-ass, balls-to-the-wall firefight ensues with Joe and his team of skilled pros returning fire with deadly efficiency, and killing every last one of the guards. The team stands in silence... enveloped by a haze of gunsmoke...until a series of moans - then SCREAMS fill the place... and the guards get up from their mortal wounds to fight again...walkers.

END OF ACT TWO**ACT THREE****INT. LONG BEACH WAREHOUSE - NIGHT**

The team faces the onslaught of walkers - unafraid of injury, and impervious to pain. The walkers LEAP down from the mezzanine and attack - biting one of our men (and showing the grisly consequences) as they drive the team deeper into the inner levels of the warehouse.

INT. LONG BEACH WAREHOUSE - CORRIDORS/LAB - NIGHT

The firefight turns into a deadly close-quarters struggle as the team reaches the walk-in refrigerator...and the civilian hostages seen with Amirah and El Mujahid - now turned into ravenous walkers - SPRING OUT FOR THE ATTACK - ambushing from behind. Realizing that these walkers are innocent civilians, Joe shouts for the team to hold their fire and retreat...but as more terrorist guard walkers show up, Grace BLASTS A HOLE through the civilians to lead the team into the lab.

With ammo running low against an overwhelming enemy that simply refuses to die, Joe and the team barricade themselves in a lab...but the walkers keep throwing themselves at the door, which slowly buckles under the onslaught.

So Joe does something crazy. He reaches for an axe and tears a wall safe from the studs. He places a grenade on the floor, throws the safe over it and overturns a lab bench over the safe. KABOOM! The grenade BLOWS OUT THE FLOOR. Our heroes fall down a story as the walkers BURST IN - and then they throw all their grenades into the room. The walkers are incinerated.

And off Joe - hating that he just murdered a group of civilians...

INT. LONG BEACH WAREHOUSE - AFTERMATH - NIGHT

Mister Church enters alongside a cleanup team - including LAURENCE St. JOHN - a DEPARTMENT ZERO BUREAUCRAT whose job it is to feed a cover story to the local police and news media (imagine Alan Rickman in Bob Roberts - Mister Church introduces him as "the only man alive feared by both Dick Cheney and Rahm Immanuel").

But before Mister Church can make any introductions, he finds Joe and Grace ARGUING. Joe gets in her face for opening fire on the civilians. Grace throws it right back at him: what did he expect her to do, try to get them to sit down? Maybe find a cure? She told him once to not second-guess her, she isn't going to tell him again. Mister Church stops the exchange in its tracks: when Department Zero operatives have a disagreement, they handle it back at HQ: never in the open.

Grace STORMS away.

Working alongside the cleanup team and gathering the aspirin-like tablets from the dead, Doctor Hu tells Mister Church that one of the terrorist guards is still alive...wounded...hasn't turned into a walker yet. Mister Church orders Doctor Hu to take the guard to the medical facility and make sure he is ready for questioning - then turns to Joe: he has something for him.

Joe turns to see Rudy, entering the warehouse - he apologizes for getting her mixed up in this. Rudy laughs him off: he's a machine, he has no doubts in life and all he wants is action. He's prayed for a break like this - for an opportunity to do nothing but fight a clear enemy without distractions - it's why he quit the army to join the police and was about to quit the police to go to Quantico. Every machine needs a mechanic, she's his: he asked for what he wanted, and they tripled her salary to get her here - so don't apologize.

"Stop putting on a show like you're a sentient mammal, Joe, what are you really thinking?"

"That this was a set-up," Joe finally says as Mister Church and Laurence St. John join the conversation.

Joe walks them across the path of the shoot-out, pointing out the reasons for his deduction -

- The guards opened fire on them at the point where their most likely point of escape would be into the lab.

- Joe then walks to the corridor with the walk-in refrigerator: the door to the fridge was open...and inside, Joe finds the bonds and ball gags for the civilian hostages - why were they untied?

- Joe finally steps to the remains of the lab - the computers and equipment were all rigged to self-destruct like the ones in the lab Grace raided in Baja...but no one started the timers, even though they had ample time, and guards and walkers holding them back - why?

Rudy shakes her head: putting together the pieces of Joe's puzzle and showing why they need each other to work at peak performance: "It's like the swine flu vaccine..." Rudy tells Mister Church and Laurence St. John, "the moment H1N1 hit, everyone panicked and the government had to funnel billions of dollars into the research and manufacture of a vaccine."

"There's at least a hundred companies doing work on prions out there," Mister Church counters.

"They don't even have to cause a major outbreak," Rudy calculates, "the moment you pick up the phone and tell the President about what's in that lab, in those computers - about the civilian victims...."

"...the next thing he'll want is an antidote...and then he's gonna start writing checks to every one of those companies," Joe says, finishing the thought.

"Of course, it's a catch-22," Rudy adds for a grace note, "because if you don't act immediately to find a cure, they can always cause an outbreak and get the same result"

Mister Church mulls this over, then shakes his head: "there won't be an outbreak...and it's a good thing the President doesn't have to find out about this until I'm good and ready to tell him." Mister Church looks to Laurence - the cover on this operation has to be airtight: the existence of the prion disease can never become known to the public health establishment or the public. In short: it is crucial that no one in the media or local law enforcement ever even think that a bio-agent was deployed here.

"Bio-Agent?" St. John replies with a smirk, "this looks like a classic case of a drug deal gone wrong."

And as Laurence St. John goes to lie his ass off, Mister Church turns to look at Joe - then at Rudy...

INT. DEPARTMENT ZERO - MIND READER ROOM - NIGHT

Mister Church leads Rudy into a room equipped with a massive computer (imagine the latter day, absolutely credible version of War Games's WOPR) with a single terminal - and only one chair. Mister Church places his eye in front of a retinal scanner and the computer COMES TO LIFE. This is Mind Reader - only two men have clearance to use it, and Mister Church is one of them.

"What does it do?" Rudy asks.

"The NSA has a system called ECHELON. Whenever someone sends an email or picks up a phone and says something like 'jihad' or 'assassinate the president,' ECHELON monitors the conversation...Mind Reader is that system on crack," Mister Church says, a proto-AI that can track every financial transaction, electronic exchange, cellphone conversation, wire transfer, fax, telex, and telegram and find patterns no human or machine can...Mind Reader draws on the internet as the source of its power, stealing processing from every computer hooked up to the web. Church tells Rudy that he is going to re-task the system to crawl up the ass of every single pharmaceutical company doing prion research in the world - and since he doesn't feel that she has the training necessary to be out in the field with Grace and Joe, he wants her to prove her mettle by heading this part of the investigation.

"Joe doesn't need you to watch over him in the field, does he?" Asks Mister Church.

"Don't do that," Rudy says, almost offhandedly.

"Do what?"

"Soft interrogation technique," Rudy says as she studies the Mind Reader interface, "build me up by giving me a sensitive assignment then ask sensitive questions. I get it that you have a hot new asset on the field and now you're worried if he's gonna fall apart without me - but that doesn't mean I'm gonna tell you how he ticks."

Mister Church's retort is cut when Doctor Hu enters: the prisoner is ready for interrogation. Mister Church looks at Rudy...and as he lets out the vaguest hint of a smile...

INT. DEPARTMENT ZERO - CORRIDOR/JOE'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Joe strides to his quarters to find Grace, staring him down.

"When two Department Zero operatives have a disagreement," she says, as if daring him to step up into the fight "they solve it in HQ."

Joe takes the challenge. In seconds, they're fighting it out: he had operational control and she disobeyed his direct order. She counters that lives were at stake and she didn't have the time to decide the best way to protect a bunch of hostiles infected with a disease that would have taken their lives either way. The argument reaches a fever pitch. Grace SLAMS Joe against the door to his room, then KISSES HIM. Joe tries to push her away: barely getting out the words that she has been through a wrenching couple of days and this is no time to -

- and with that, she opens the door to his room and pushes him inside, SLAMMING the door shut. Emergency sex ensues. It's hot as hell.

INT. DEPARTMENT ZERO - MEDICAL FACILITY - NIGHT

Mister Church enters to find one of the guards from the warehouse in a hospital bed - his wounds cleaned and bandaged. He's being fed the control drug via IV. He will live. Mister Church tells the terrorist that he could just withhold the control agent and watch him turn into a walker...but that would be torture.

Instead, Mister Church talks to the terrorist in perfect Arabic - and refers to him by his first and last name. The terrorist starts - how does Mister Church know his name? Mister Church doesn't answer - he clicks on a remote. A screen lights up with a predator drone feed - the drone is flying over the terrorist's village in the Middle East!

Mister Church makes one thing clear - the terrorist is going to live to know that he brought about the destruction of his village by not cooperating. Mister Church wants to know how much of the prion agent *Seif Al Din* has made, and how they plan to use it. The prisoner calls Church a dog...and Church corrects him. He's not a dog. He's a monster.

INT. DEPARTMENT ZERO - JOE'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Grace exits Joe's quarters just before a door bursts open to REVEAL Mister Church and Dr. Hu. Grace turns, fairly confident that Mister Church didn't see her exiting Joe's quarters...Mister Church tells Grace to get the team together - the terrorists are going to hit a target and he knows what it is. Joe steps out of his room - and Dr. Hu exchanges a knowing glance with Mister Church, who gives away nothing. He simply tells Joe and Grace what he knows...the target is a meeting of an influential right-wing political lobby in San Diego.

The meeting will include a large number of high-profile targets: media figures and CEOs...all in a crowded downtown hotel by the convention center...a major population hub...and they're hitting it in less than TWO HOURS.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. SEBASTIAN GAULT'S MERCEDES BENZ - DAWN

Sebastian Gault rides in the back seat with Amirah. His bodyguard drives. Amirah reports that she has provided *Seif Al Din* with a limited quantity of the prion: all they need is a few hundred doses to achieve maximum panic. Amirah takes out her laptop and calls up an animated graphic of a map of California. A black mass SPREADS across the map, indicating the rate of the infection.

The consequences of a successful deployment of the prion will render Southern California uninhabitable in a matter of weeks. Gault thanks Amirah and takes out his PDA, with which he activates an anonymous payment to Amirah. Amirah looks at the PDA - El Mujahid and *Seif Al Dein* are true believers - but is this really all about the money for Gault?

Gault shrugs - he runs the most progressive health care company in the world - the more money it makes, the more power it has, the more power it has, the more drugs it can develop for everyone, not just the rich. That's worth a few lives. Gault turns to Amirah - she is the most gifted genetic designer he has ever known: why doesn't she just come to work for him? Amirah smiles...because she's in it for the money. She exits the car, leaving her computer behind...and as gault looks at the map, and the impending destruction of California...

INT. DEPARTMENT ZERO HELICOPTER - DAY

Grace and Joe stand with Mister Church at the forward bay of the helicopter - talking on a two-way video link with JEREMIAH MEANS - head of security for the meeting in San Diego. Imagine him as Tom Hanks at his most earnest and cooperative...he beams that he picked all of the agents in the security detail personally, and performed background checks on every hotel employee serving the gathering. Should he just go ahead and cancel the meeting?

Church shakes his head - absolutely not. Joe hits MUTE and turns to Mister Church - is he willing to use all those innocent civilians as bait? That's cold.

Mister Church explains with the aforementioned sangfroid: the terrorists haven't planted a bomb, they are sending an agent to deploy the weapon. If we don't catch them in the act, they will try again with another target, and perhaps make even more of the prion agent: it has to end today.

Means agrees to upload his personnel files to us and lets us know that we will have full cooperation. Mister Church tells Joe and Grace that Echo Team will have suits matching those of the security detail waiting for them on the helipad - he has a friend in the rag trade. Joe and Grace turn to their PDAs for the rest of the briefing...

...and that's when Joe turns to Grace - he wants to talk about what happened between them. Grace tells Joe there's nothing to say - it was Emergency Sex. She faces death all the time. She needed to feel alive. That was it, nothing personal. All Grace wants from Joe is the knowledge that when the shit goes down on the field, he is going to have her back - everything else is compartmentalized and unrelated...a skill Joe had better learn if he wants to survive this work.

And that's when Ollie steps up: "Are mommy and daddy fighting? 'cause we have a lot of floor plan for that hotel to memorize." And as Joe nods, getting down to business...

EXT./INT. SAN DIEGO HOTEL - HELIPAD - DAY

A series of POPS shows the team landing at a helipad and entering the large metropolitan hotel - now dressed in suits and ties - to rendezvous with Jeremiah Means and his team.

Joe and Grace follow Jeremiah Means into the large conference salon - the place is festooned with bigwigs...all protected by Means's security team. Means shares some armed forces talk with Joe - he himself was in Special Forces, maybe they met on the field? Joe shakes his head - he's focused on the job - the room.

A speaker takes the pedestal to much APPLAUSE. Joe scans the large room. There are metal detectors at all the entrances...guards everywhere...one of them waves a metal detector over a waiter...this place is sealed tighter than a presidential appearance...so where is the terrorist? How do they plan to deliver the device?

That's when Joe notices one of the security men...opening a silver vial...chomping down on an aspirin. El Mujahid. Joe draws his gun and seeks a bead. One of the CEOs in the crowd gets in the way. El Mujahid draws a remote from his jacket.

Joe gets his shot. He FIRES hitting El Mujahid on the shoulder. The room erupts in CHAOS and PANIC.

But El Mujahid lives - he SCRAMBLES for his remote - about to activate his vest - Joe has no way to get there - and no more shot...and that's when Ollie DIVES across the room and onto El Mujahid - just as he hits the remote...and the loud PHWWHOOOOSH of his vest BLOWING OPEN...

...Joe and Grace reach Ollie as El Mujahid scrambles out...Ollie rolls over - his chest covered in flechettes...Joe is about to go after El Mujahid...as he notices that some of the flechettes found targets...and that several of the civilians have been hit...and as the walkers GRAB Joe and Grace, their teeth snapping!

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM - CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS

Chaos reigns - Joe and Grace fight off the walkers who have set on them as other infected civilians bite the fleeing convention goers. Joe dispatches the walker attacking him - and before he can help Grace, notices El Mujahid - wounded by flechettes - but being ushered out of a side door by Jeremiah Means.

Grace dispatches the walker on her, Joe tells her to stay here, control the other civilian walkers...and as he sprints out after Means...Ollie grabs Joe's foot...he is turning...and he speaks his last words.

"Kill me." It's a heartbreaking moment. Joe shakes his head - then puts one in Ollie's and runs after the men responsible, hellbent for blood.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Joe finds Means standing over an unconscious El Mujahid...Joe draws his gun: why'd he do it? Means shrugs - ten million dollars. That was it. Means then smiles...and that's when Joe realizes that El Mujahid - flechettes sticking out from his face, his skin practically throbbing from the overdose - has turned walker and is RISING behind him.

El Mujahid GRABS Joe. Means RUNS. Joe busts out his every last piece of martial arts knowledge on El Mujahid - but this walker is strong, mean and more than up for the fight...and as Joe takes more damage than he causes...Means runs down the hallway - only to be cut off by Grace. Means draws. Grace beats him to it. She puts him down.

El Mujahid opens up on Joe - and it's all Joe can do against an opponent who cannot die.

El Mujahid gets the drop on Joe, pinning him down, about to take a bite from his neck - and that's when Grace's bullets knock him off Joe, giving Joe enough time to grab El Mujahid's head and SNAP his neck. El Mujahid falls to the floor. Dead.

Joe looks up at Grace. "I told you I'd have your back," she says.

VIDEO IMAGE - A NEWS BROADCAST

Laurence St. John gives a statement to the local media...impersonating a Homeland Security agent and lying through his teeth as he says that there was indeed an "incident" - a small terror cell delivered a nerve agent to the convention and, sadly, took several innocent lives.

The PR man then gives all the credit to Homeland Security, who not only contained the threat, but also apprehended every one of the terror suspects responsible. And as the PR man yammers on...

INTERCUT WITH JOE, GRACE, RUDY AND DR. HU

watching at Department Zero. "Does Homeland Security always get all the credit for what we do?" asks Joe. Grace shrugs. Dr. Hu suggests that they still have badges from when they impersonated Homeland Security - maybe they should go down there and take some of the credit.

"Don't joke, people died today - our people," snaps Grace as she turns to go. "If I didn't make jokes about the things we do," Dr. Hu snaps back, "I'd have to take the fetal position and pop a thumb."

Joe and Rudy exchange glances. Rudy asks if there's a Starbucks close by. Joe and Rudy turn to go...and as Dr. Hu **TURN'S OFF** the television broadcast:

EXT. GAULT PHARMACEUTICALS - NIGHT

As Sebastian Gault's bodyguard pulls Gault's Mercedes up to the main rotunda. Gault springs out of the vehicle and rushes in...

INT. SEBASTIAN GAULT'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Gault enters and opens his vault to retrieve several documents - not noticing that there is someone there with him. Mister Church. Introducing himself as an agent of the government, Mister Church makes it abundantly clear that he is here to make Gault pay for financing today's attack by *Seif Al Din*.

"The nerve gas attack?" Gault dissembles. Mister Church shuts him down: all it took was one wise Latina former LAPD detective armed with a very clever computer to run a forensic investigation into Jeremiah Means's finances...and it doesn't help that Gault has been covertly negotiating since the failure of the attack to live and run his company from out of the country.

Gault looks at Mister Church - busted. Mister Church simply tells Gault that "there is no such thing as an untraceable cell phone."

Gault just shrugs: even if all of this were true, none of it will stand in court. His attorneys will have a field day with Mister Church and his methods.

"Then let's leave the attorneys out of it," declares Mister Church - right before pulling out a silenced handgun and aiming at Gault.

And off the BANG!

CUT TO BLACK

END OF PILOT